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WILD FLOWERS

A BOOK OF VERSE.

BY

REGINALD ROGERS.

Flowers that bloom in country lane and field,
Untrained and lawless as the tangled hedge
Thro' which they peep.

LONDON:
JOHN OUSELEY LIMITED.
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PREFACE

It has been said that all verse written in early life should be regarded as apprentice work, written only in order that the writer may gain the mastery of his tools.

Many authors are of opinion that it is a mistake to publish these early works on which the 'prentice hand is so strongly marked; but I do not share their views, because the first step must be taken before the writer can know his own strength and weakness.

In the following poems, written during the last two years, I expect the reader to see many faults; but it is possible, too, he may, bearing in mind my inexperience, find in an otherwise darkened sky a few sparks which show promise of better work later on. For I believe if a writer will ever do anything worth while, anything fit to live, a few harbingers of that to come, will be seen in his early efforts, if the critic will take the trouble to look for them.

So I make my verses public, trusting they may be read by broad-minded men and women, who are ever ready to encourage even the faintest promise of ability.

R. R.

London.
February, 1911.

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SOHO SQUARE: A DRAMATIC SKETCH 62

DEDICATION

To R. C. R., Esq.

The little daisy hidden in the fields
Must bloom obscure. Unseen, save by the wind
That stirs the wheat above her, and the kind
Sun whom all the flowers love ; and so she yields
Her modest sweets to them alone, and feels
No discontent that children do not find
Her hiding-place, to pluck and gaily bind
Her blossom to the wand the May Queen wields.
So without thee, dear friend, and more to me
Than friend, much like the daisy would my fate
Have been. Condemned my life in poverty,
With little or no hope of else, to wait ;
Ne'er had I penned a line, who dedicate
These verses, with my heart in them, to thee.

Wild Flowers.

RENUNCIATION

As when some tired wanderer of the plain,
With thirsty lips and burning brow oppressed,
Finds a clear pool whose unperturbéd breast
Reflects his eager, yearning face—O then
Wet lips, wet brow, and so wet lips again!
  But now the violated fount doth seem
  To show his image as a troubled dream
Ghastly and strange, a phantom among men.

So in my heart's deep well of silent love,
  I hold reflected, too, a face—and thee
  In form and thy soft, summoning lips I see;
  But I must never, never drink thereof;
And sealed against the quenching of love's fire
Is that sweet fountain of my soul's desire.

BLIND

I CANNOT rest while these sad thoughts I keep ;
So I'll tell all—perchance 'twill ease my heart.

. . . . . .

As late I strode along that squalid part
Of Bethnal Green, where ragged children weep
The whole day long, and happy when asleep,
In dreams (their only happiness)—a little child,
With haggard face that mocked her when she smiled,
Pitifully begged from out her heart's core deep.

And as I passed, regardless of her woe,
She sobbed that she was blind ! Oh, then her cries
Told me her lot ; and also ours they show.
Poor child, thou shalt see God at Heaven's Gate !
We, too, are blind—not to our high estate,
But to the misery that round us lies.

ON SEEING A TABLET UPON THE WALL IN THE CLOISTERS OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY

A TABLET grey with age : pause, loiterer ; nay,
Observe full well the lines engraven : bare
" Jane Lister, Dear Childe "—all that meets thee there.
Oh, throbbing words ! Instinct with tears are they ;
Remindful of the sad, sad time when lay
A child deaf to a mother's call. What grief
Is here ! " Dear Childe." A mother's words are brief
When sorrow laps her round. No words portray
True grief as silence, nor such grief convey.
Oh, Mother, in thy love thou didst not show
In verse elaborate that all might know
Thy loss ; but in the passion of thy soul
A sob from out thy broken heart to toll
Thy impotent despair and bitter woe.

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY

'Tis of the "Virgin and her Child—Unknown."
In a dark corner of the gallery
It hangs, and others pass it by. To me
It has as great a charm as Raphael's own,
Although it is unsought for and alone.
Such sad beauty has the Mother, Mary,
Such tender thoughtfulness; (I cannot see
Her without tears) a child, yet woman grown.

The artist's name is lost. "Unknown" is styled
The picture; yet I needs must think his wife
Is the Madonna here, the Christ his child.
Too well does her expression speak their life—
Poverty and want are traced, but cannot hide
The wondrous smile that still proclaims her bride.

TO MY MOTHER

MOTHER! the wild wave and many a mile
Divide us; and each year a longer one
That keep thy tender heart and ready smile
From me, thy first born and thy first loved son.
But Thought, given the wings of Love, flies true,
And faster than the falling of a star,
So, though I cannot hear thy voice or view
Thy form, they in my mind forever are.

Didst thou not love me half so much, thou hadst
Not let me live in London far away
From thee; for 'twas my wish and so thou badst
Me speed. Yet, O, had I not gone, each day
I had not learned how dear to me thy breath.
If Absence so affects, how then would Death?

ON VISITING THE TOMB OF SHAKESPEARE

THE setting sun half dimly lights the grey
Old church, and turns to gold the elms which spread
Before the portal's arch a shadowy way.
Shakespeare! 'twas thy last resting-place that led
Me many miles to see; yet now 'tis not
This pile that calls thy spirit back to earth;
To woodland wide, to neighbouring hills the lot
Has fall'n; in them thy power and thy re-birth.

E'en as I strolled among the large-limbed trees,
My wakened fancy pointed to an oak,
Where Jaquès might have leaned with studied ease;
And then methought that Justice Shallow spoke.
For he, who lies so near the organ's tone,
Hath spread his magic over every stone.

SONNET

The boisterous winds have packed dark clouds
away,
And with a farewell blast have followed too,
Leaving Spring mistress of the new-born day.
It is a glorious evening, and a view
Stretches before me of wide woods and sheep
Upon the grassy hills; tranquil the while
The fields and flowery slopes, as if asleep
Dreaming of Summer days with drowsy smile.

So do I dream—my thoughts are but as dreams,
Which fade and vanish when I take my pen;
Vanish as sleep before Aurora's beams.
I love—I *feel*—no more—'tis but again
The same. My pen falls useless to my knee,
My eyes are swimming and I cannot see.

ON SEEING A CHILD ROLLING A HOOP

Thou who adown the slope of yonder park
Rollest thy hoop, thy locks flung to the breeze,
Laughing as thou go'st—I love to mark
Thy course till lost to view in distant trees!

How much imagination hath the mind
Of child, to fancy that so plain a toy
Is such a wondrous thing! and ever blind
To its simplicity, a constant joy
It doth remain, while he is young and free.
Are we not grown-up children, after all?
Do we not think our deeds to be
Far greater than they are? To Him how small,
E'en those who are o'er Earth victorious.
We are to God as is the child to us.

ON VIEWING THE PERFORMANCE OF *JULIUS CÆSAR*

At His Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket

As the warm wind doth clear the April sky
From heavy clouds, sweeping them all before
Her breath, to bide until the Spring be o'er,
So from my mind these present days rush by
At Shakespeare's wand; and all my senses fly
To Antony in Rome, the clash of war
At Philippi and Cassius steeped in gore,
And misled Brutus watching Cæsar die.

But now the curtain falls, the lights are out,
The Player sheds his toga for the coat,
I wake to hear the people clap and shout.
How well the Poet's lines on Brutus can
To himself apply, in clarion note
To sound to all the world—"*This was a man*"!

TWO SONNETS

On the Picture of "Hope," by Watts

I.

THOUGH blind I still can think she sees her way
To Hope; for Hope's a light when all around
Is dark, and, like a star at close of day,
Shines all the brighter as in duty bound
To show the world she's not discouraged by
The sun. Ay, she is blind; and yet with mine
Her eyes can see one lone star in the sky,
For it is Hope's last spark which still doth shine.

And she is deaf; and yet her lute she hears,
Though it has only one remaining string,
The last of many broken these long years.
Beautiful Hope! thy faith new life doth bring
To me. I look, and come again—I cease
Despairing: and my soul knows now great peace.

II.

When I behold thee, Hope, both deaf and blind,
Yet looking out into the Future, still
All undiscouraged and still strong in mind,
Then do I think upon my own weak will,
Despairing, spite of all I do. I know
From the dark side of Life I have not force
To turn away my eye; nor do I go
To drown my senses in slow Lethe's course.

Yet can I learn a lesson, Hope, from thee.
I have my sight—wherefore do I complain?
And I have friends, if need will comfort me;
And I am young, and have not had defeats nor pain,
Nor sorrow, with which thou hast had to cope,—
O smile in midst of woe, for this is Hope!

AGE AND YOUTH

When Autumn of man's life is passed, and he
No longer feels the buoyancy of youth,
He finds the world inclined to let him be—
Maids pass him by, but not so Winter's tooth,
Which leaves each year more strong upon his mien
Its mark. Old Time hath turned his hair to white,
As he has come within his sickle keen.
He does look old indeed to outward sight.

But young, and growing younger since age came,
His soul. And when at last pale Death is due,
That soul but leaves behind a worthless frame,
And in another world starts life anew.
Why then Old Age regard with such disdain?
Age has a youth the Young can ne'er obtain.

THE SEASONS

THERE is the Youth, when Spring with smiling eye
Surveys her handiwork. How tender green
The leaves on roadside hedge and tree are seen.
Then languid Summer comes with scorching sky,
Where clouds like snowy ships go sailing by,
Bound to some port where only birds have been;
Their cargo rain-drops, for the flowers lean
So toward the sun their cups are always dry.

There is the middle-age, when the trees learn
Autumn's dun garb to wear; now Winter old,
With icy fingers on a frozen dial,
Is here, and snow-clouds all the skies blind-fold.
So are the Seasons in men's lives—but while
Spring comes again, in man 'twill ne'er return.

SOLITUDE

AT sea, and out of sight of shore, is found
True solitude; on land it is not there.
E'en in the very mountain's heart a sound
Is piped by warbling bird, or insect where
We least expect it, drones. And in the wide,
Wide desert, with its great sand-wastes of white,
Which rise and fall, even as falls the tide

Of ocean, long lean lizards love to creep ;
The wild hyena's laugh rings out at night,
And fierce-eyed owls shriek from stunted tree.
Leaves, rocks, rough hills guarding shy deer, all keep
The eye distracted and alert. The sea
Reflects the sky upon its polished wave—
Like it is fathomless and lone and grave.

THE POET

A Poet ! What need he of money ? cries
The World—the busy world that still can read
With pleasure Shelley's odes. But this their creed :
What has a Poet to do with monies ?
He lives as best he can, and when he dies
His fame's assured—but living, people heed
Him not. His soul is all he has to feed.
And such the mystic poet in their eyes.

Alas, some Poets must be poor !—but still
The greatest had enough on which to live.
Let but the Poet feel his funds are low
And failing, then health, mind and verses will
Soon crumble too. Then this plain truth believe—
Worry and Want the Poet's greatest foe !

JUNE DAYS

THE year has given us her longest day
Before she shows her favour to the night.
The bees with busy boldness are in flight,
While down the valley, deep in woody way,
The cuckoo mocks their labour from the spray.
O for a charm to keep forever bright
The shady groves and sunny hills, so might
We dream hard months before us all away.

Alas, the longest day must have its eve,
And summer night must run its course, and leave
The world a shorter morn. Now in the west
The low red sun, and we from yon hill-crest
Must turn to town. What selfishness to grieve!
Such as our lot is, let us do our best.

SUGGESTED BY THE PICTURE ENTITLED " HE HAD GREAT POSSESSIONS,"

(*by Watts*).

WITH head bowed down he stands before the Lord,
Who said: " If thou dost wish with me to live,
First sell thy lands; go, unto thy native
Poor, distribute all thou hast." . . . With sad steps toward
The palace-halls the rich man turns, where stored
His great possessions, to obey and give.

Christ was not wroth when thus He saw him grieve,
But won his heart with love, the sure reward
Of gentle look and word. So it is writ
The needy were made glad; the ruler, who
Gave all, loved Christ's dear Name and hallowed it.
Eternal truth! That selfish men who learn
Unselfishness through love, gain God's love too;
For He hath said Love man, My love to earn.

SONNET

On reading a Criticism of my Poems, by
MRS. FREDERICK KENDALL

A POET'S love is like a flow'ret in
The fields rejoicing in its life; and so
Is pure and tender and can bear no blow
Of World's unkindness. Pluck, to smile within
Some crowded room where all is dance and din,
That blossom from its rightful place, and lo,
It droops its head, it fades, its odours go,
And thus is lost what we had hoped to win.

So at the World's cold sneer the Poet's love
Alike doth fade. Since it is love he writes of
Then love he needs to keep his verse alive,
And for it looks to man. So now that I
Have gained this love from thee, the more will strive
To keep it lighted in my Country's eye.

THE BEGGAR

I MET an aged beggar in my walk,
And in his face, his step, his look,
His bending figure, palsied hands that shook,
I knew him for the man whose talk
Would tell what one already saw—that gone
Was hope with age. And as I would pass on
He caught my eye;
I could not pass him by,
For mirrored there I seemed to see
Himself as when he used to be
As young, as sanguine, free of care as I—
Who once had held his head as high
With pride, as now with shame 'twas low.
Ah, in those happier days of long ago
Perchance he had a home, was loved, and life
Was not the dreary strife
He finds it now, all lonely and forlorn.
Oh, pass not by with scorn,
Ye proud, and ye who are by chance rich born!
For Life is but like steps we all must climb,
Each in his different way, but every time
We gain a step we look behind,
And tell one more to bear our way in mind.
But Life is treach'rous and lays snares for all,
And balsam there is none for those who fall!

THE PUNISHED CHILD

I saw you strike her, though not long
Before she sang the little song
You taught her, called "The Lamb of God," you know;
Ne'er dreaming of a blow
From you—from you of gentle tongue;
And she so young.
She did no wrong;
Wrong in your eyes, but not in hers.
She knew not why you struck her. So
You are to blame, not she.
Take her upon your knee,
And with soft words, and with a kiss between,
Explain to her just what you mean.
Your only Dear
Must learn through love to mind you, not through fear.
But you have struck her. Well
She will forget. I tell
You, and you see
Her playing underneath the tree,
And singing with the firs.
She will forget, your child, my pet.
But you who struck her—O, can you forget?

INFINITE

Two travellers on the castled peak
Of Liebenstein had stopped to rest.
Neither could speak
The other's tongue, but both were blest
With that rare nature that alone
Can love and understand
The grandeur of a castle old,
And the sad beauty of the hills. While one
Stood near and gazed down where the setting sun
Had bathed the Rhine in gold
And murmured in low tone,
" How beautiful ! How grand ! "
The other with outstretched hand
And wonder-wakened eyes
Thus plainly told
In language both command,
His love of rocks, and trees, and sunny skies.

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

When thou wast of that tender age
When Life is like a page
From fairy book, dear child,
I took thee to a Merry-go-Round.
And there in sound
Of pipe and drum I stood, and smiled
To watch thee where astride
A toy horse thou didst ride
With other children in a laughing line.
And when the while
Thy eager eyes met mine,
Then I
For love would wave thee a good-bye.
Now that thou art gone, and leave me
But the remembrance of thy smile,
Thy voice, thy tears, to raise
Thy many childlike ways
Within my mind,
I love to watch those horses as of old ;
For sometimes do I find
A child resembling thee,
As thou wast in that age of gold.
Then where I stand
I smile, and wave my hand ;
Though, looking on her youthful years
My eyes are wet with tears.

A RECOLLECTION

It seems as yesterday,
Half sleeping as I lay
I saw my Mother in her loose white dress,
As she stood there
With her long dark falling hair,
And one broad tress
Would almost hide
Her face that I looked up at, wondering
Wherefore she came so early to my side.
And then I understood.
My Mother went to church, and would
I, much to please her, go?
Then she left me as an angel might
Who had watched o'er a sleeping soul at night.

To-day it is with pain
I think of how I went
With her in discontent,
Which I in many ways did show.
I smiled not when she smiled,
Although along our path the flowers wild
Were bright with dew,
And from the hedge a bird
Did sing
Twice over his sweet strain,
For fear we had not heard
His opening melody.

So we came to church, and while I stayed
And fretted in the pew,
My Mother beside me prayed,—
Would God I had known then she prayed for me.

IMAGINATION AND REALITY

A CHILD I used to watch with so much love
The mowers at their work, and I
Loving to play
In new-mown hay
Approached to try,
But men with coarse tongues drove
Me with affright away.
And now to-day
I have seen faces in a crowd
I would have liked to know;
For they, I thought, could understand my ways.
I have seen cottages with thatched roof low,
And flowers blowing from the thatch,
Here I would love to lift the latch.
Here live; no loud
Streets hem them in, and days
Of solitude I here could pass
Among the flowers and sweet-smelling grass.
I have seen children I have wished were mine,
To press them to my heart, divine
Through tender love their wants.
But all these sylvan haunts,
These pleasant faces,
Have proved in many cases
Not all they seemed to be,
When I came near to see.

The hills that from a distance seem to rest
Against the skies, and seen
So smooth and round,
Upon approach abound
In crag, and steep, and wide ravine.
And so to dream is best.
With soulful eyes to see life through our dreams,
And love it as it seems.

LINES

Written in an Album

THINK on this day that thou wast born,
Think on it from the first hours of the morn.
How bright and pure shines out the sun,
So was it when thy life had just begun.
Pure as the lily in the wood
Thy years have ripened to young womanhood.
This thou couldst not help, for when the seed is good
The flower must be pure, 'tis understood.
But this from henceforth thou canst help. Make sure
Each coming year is no less pure
Than those that went before.
Wait not until the year is o'er
To say, "I will do better in the next,"
But make this for each day, each hour, thy text.
And when at length the years
That now but tend to make thee the more fair,
Shall turn with gentle touch thy hair
From darkest brown to grey,
And thou art nodding by the chimney nook,
Thou'lt have no fears
To take this down, and to thy grandchild say:
"See here, and here, and here,
"On this and this and this year
"My life was better than the last!
"See how I read it through the past!"
Then take thy pen; write in her book
That I have writ in yours to-day.

SUNSET ON THE RHINE

After a day of sailing like a seagull down the stream,
We turned a bend and dropp'd into a mystic land of dream;
On our near side rose the Loreley with its legend-haunted head,
And as we gazed, the sinking sun shot the sky one glorious red,
And the heavens burned through ruined Rheinfels, toward
Which the French had marched and laid waste its halls with fire and sword,
The halls where the pine now moans and sobs in the valley wind
That carried us on half-breathless with wonder, to find
As I turned to thee from the glowing skies
My thoughts, every one, were reflected deep in thy eyes.

REFLECTION

I see reflected in the river
The green trees; all a-quiver
Are their laughing leaves.
And as I gaze the sun goes down
Behind the house-tops of the town,
And, lo, the green branch leaves

The tree-trunk, and the tree-trunks fade away
As the golden glow with the dying day ;
And I feel as I turn from the waters dark,
My pleasures are like the trees in the park,
That show their green heads in the stream ;
And my love like the sun,
For now she is gone ; every one
Of the hours I spent with her, seem
To have vanished, and left me alone with a dream.

SLEEP

O, Love, let us love Sleep,
For then in dreams we meet ;
O then our spirits meet
In sweet felicity.

Sleep, do not leave me,
Else you will grieve me.
O my love, my love is by !
And we so love Sleep, my love and I :
Night let it ever be ;
Day let us never see.
Day we abhor ; Night we adore.
Day, I do deride thee !
O, sweet Night, abide thee !
For then in dreams we meet,
O then our spirits meet
In sweet felicity.

MY CANDLE

A CANDLE is a thing to love,
When it is for the Son of God above.
And notice well before Christ's Shrine
How there will shine
A halo of warm light
From tapers placed there by the priest.
And so when in my room at night
With only one small candle burning bright,
I think of God and Christ.

IN THE STREET

As I wandered on with tired feet
Through the hurrying crowds of a London street
I heard my name called soft and sweet;
Sweet in a loved, remembered sound
I had not heard in a long, long while.
And I stood and gaz'd with a wondering smile
And a beating heart at the crowd around,
And the love in my eyes faded thereat,
For I saw but faces, sad and gay—
While she who could only have called like that
Was a thousand miles away.

LINES

It is too late, and I have gone too far
To turn back now.
Although my path is set with rock and scar,
I must keep on. I must endure
The road that I have ta'en.
I must keep on. To turn back now,
Though weary and of myself not sure,
Would only end in my despair.
I must keep on and try to gain
That I have gone to find.
I must keep on.
Although I leave thee far behind
In rose-sweet air.
If I should turn back now
A painful pleasure only would be mine;
For I cannot be thine
As I am now, and so I must keep on.
To God and thee I pray,
O help me keep my chosen way!

GOD IN THE EVENING

THE sun was low and the air was cool,
And the crows like children out of school,
In noisy groups of two and three,
Were going to rest on loitering wing—
Then as I watched each living thing
I thought of how much God had done for me.

The evening set in, and the stars one by one
Came out like jewels to gladden the eye;
The lambs bleat sleepily on to the fold,
And the moon for them cast a path of gold—
Then as I heard them passing by
I thought of what God for me had done.

I have often wished to do what I can't—
For money to buy all the things I want;
I have fretted and fumed like a child of three
Who is spoiled by having more than his share.
But as I stood in the evening fair,
I thought of all God had done for me.

I have thought of it since, again and again,
When the eve is cool in the country free,
And the breezes blow from over the lea,
Bowing the heads of the growing grain;
And I wondered how I could ever complain,
When God has done so much for me.

A DAY IN SPRING

Blue is the sea, bright is the sea—
Blue and bright as the Day;
How can one fail to be
    Happy and gay?

Good weather is coming—
    Has come.
The bees are humming—
    Will hum
As long as the flowers are bright,
As long as the day is right.
So how can one not delight
    To be living to-day?

The birds are singing,
The swallows are winging
Their way through the bright blue sky;
    Nothing complains
    In the sunny lanes,
So why indeed should I?

But I see o'er the brow
Of yonder cliff a dark cloud rest;
Soon will the rain drench the song-bird's nest.
Soon will it weep the sky,
Oh, yon dark cloud holds sorrow for me,
    And it will come by and by.

But the birds are singing,
The swallows are winging
Through the bright blue sky their way;
The bee still hums,
And the woodpecker drums.
So away with sorrow! Until it comes
I will be happy and gay,
I will be happy to-day.

AT NIGHT

I.

He stands the London kerb beside,
And Hunger's mark is on his face;
The woman, ragged, absent-eyed,
Sees not the crowds—sees not the place.

Sees not the baby at her breast,
Nor bends her head to hear his croon;
He laughing hears—and it is best—
The Organ-grinder's merry tune.

II.

In some cold corner of the street
The Match-girl, shivering, takes her stand;
From morn to eve her weary feet
Have paced in vain the throbbing Strand.

Woeful and wan, her pleading eye
Looks in the face of all who come;
Above, the pitiless cold sky;
About, the city's ceaseless hum.

THE MAN WHO WENT TO GOD

With painful steps the stairs he climbed,
As the bells in the belfry midnight chimed.
His face was hollow and gaunt and old,
Though his years were but six and thirty all told.
But the man who climbed was starving to death,
And at every stair he stopped for breath,
And at every stair he cursed the Lord
Who had smote him down with so keen a sword.
The World had spurned and cursed him away,
And now in his heart could he pray?
He had prayed before—
He would pray no more!
So he reached his garret door.

For long he sat and in silence now
He thought of his life, and the manly vow
He had made to his Mother long ago,
When he stood by her bed and held her hand—
Her hand that was whiter than snow.
Thank God, there was none in the land
To know how he failed, how he lied!
Thank God his Mother had died
Believing in him. Hot tears came, and he cried,
"Oh, God, forgive me my wild outburst;
"Forgive me the many times I have cursed
"And profaned Thy Holy Name."
Then his spirit calmer became,
But the pain in his heart was like flame.
He had eaten nothing for three long days,
And his body burned with eternal blaze.

He looked below on the noisy crowds,
And he looked above at the moonlit clouds;
He heard below the city's jars,
But his eyes were fixed on the dancing stars;
Then peace crept slowly into his heart,
And he felt less painfully hunger's dart.
In a voice he hardly knew as his own,
So gentle, so calm had it grown,
He said, "If I'm wretched and poor,
"And hunger and worry endure,
"To-night in my garret so high,
"So close to the beckoning sky,
"I am better than those who below
"Are so rich, but to earth are so low.
"I am nearer to God than ever before—
"Oh, God, I will knock at Heaven's door——"
And he fell down dead on the floor.

They found him there on the following day,
A ragged outcast, who lay
With his face to the skies,
His lips were still in a wondrous smile,
And in peace were closed his eyes.

And they said to each other the while,
"We have watched him for long, and his ways;
"He has eaten nothing for three long days."
They looked not below on the noisy crowd,
But they looked above at the morning cloud,
And then bore him away, with heads bowed.

THE LONG ROAD

THREE times you came
And looked adown the road with anxious eyes?
Lifting my voice I called his name,
His pet name only I may use;
But no call came in answer, no replies.
He cannot lose
His way, or wander from the path?
The Road unto the very end
Has neither break nor bend.
And many walk that highway soon and late?
The Road is open to the king and thrall.
But still he hath
Not come, and still you watch and wait?
Yes, still I watch and call,
And now the mist-wreaths hide the vales from sight,
And skies are now fast fading into night.

HOME

I NEVER dreamed that in the days to come
My home should be to me no longer home.

Careless childhood has no thoughts like these—
Where all is sunshine one no shadow sees.

My home to me, alas, is not the same!
And yet it was with longing and with love I came.

For when upon Life's Ocean I long tossed,
And my comrades and my friends to me were lost,

I always thought I had one place to come,
If worst should come to worst—I had my home.

When Care and Worries' waves would hem me round,
I strove against them boldly, for I found

That thinking of my home would send me through,
And in the end it did—I conquered, too.

And then I let my thoughts my footsteps guide,
And they brought me safely to my old home side.

I found my mother waiting at the door.
She cried and laughed to see me home once more.

I found my room the same as when a boy
I left it gladly, full of hope and joy.

The pleasant fields where as a child I played
With my dear brother, and the sunny glade

Where we used to camp out in the spring,
Had changed not since—and yet—one thing

I missed—my youth—my childhood's days,
And missing that I missed my home's old ways.

And then I knew, and felt it with great pain,
Home and the child would never come again.

BEREAVED

Come to me, dear one, come, I plead—
But me you do not heed.

Come to me, dear one, come before
The low sun draws his curtain of rose red.
Come and lay your little head
Against my heart, that I may love you more.

I call to you—dear Child! Hark how!—
Come back! Oh, hide not from me now.

Come back and press against my side.
Come back and laugh and say,
"Now, sir, let us play
"At hide and seek. You hide
"And I will find you—hide!"

Come back, dear one, and sit upon my knee,
You were never shy, dear Child, with me.

How did I dare
To kiss you so?
'Twas Love, not I, that kissed you. There!
Come back, and we will go
To feed your gold-fish in the garden pool.

You cannot go to school
To-day, you are not well enough, you know.
To-morrow you may though.

To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow!
And on that day of sorrow,
On that bleak black day
She went alone her way.

And One was there to let her in,
The Master of us all,
She was so very small
He took her in His arms within.

And she is happy there, for He
Has gardens far more beautiful
Than those she loved to see
When she came home from school.

THE POET'S POEM

WHAT shall I write? The Poet sighed
And opened his garret window wide.
He looked below on the passing crowd,
And the noise of the city was loud.

And he said—Not of Peace, but of Care
I will write—of that deepest despair
That tears at the hearts of the poor—
Of the misery great they endure,

When their children are praying for food.
Can they think God is watchful and good,
When they start and shiver in bed
With cold, and their children cry for bread?

I will write of that dreary morn
That steals on the outcasts forlorn,
As they rise from their beds in the street,
And are spurned by all whom they meet;

Till, mad by starvation, they cry
In their agony—"God, we shall die
Like dogs in the streets—do You care?
You see us and heed not our prayer!"

I will write of that wretched unknown,
Who starves in his garret alone . . .
I will write this and call it—A Life
Where God and the Poor are at strife.

AN OLD ANTHOLOGY

THE book was torn and shabbily bound—
I searched it through and through;
And on a faded page I found
The name of William Drew.

William Drew and Poet, I saw,
But no verse of his to us is known;
No sonnet or ode from the half a score
That rest in the book I own.

No date of when he lived or where—
Of that the world will never know;
And knowing not his name will care;
But as the book is old, 'twas long ago.

I read the verses he had penned.
They were verses sad and sweet,
As when great joy and sorrow blend,
As when the heart for love doth beat.

And then I came to a verse which read
(His words have proved too true),
"Fresh flowers thrive o'er last year's dead;
"The World forgets the old year for the new."

LINES

THE first faint sight of land after a ten
Days' stormy voyage on the seas. The sun
Warm shining on the farmer's wheat-field when
He feared the rain would ruin all that he had done ;
A first-born to a mother, and a holiday
To the schoolboy dawning clear and gay ;
To thirsty wanderer, who long has searched in vain,
A stream, when first the cool spring water sips ;
Are sweet—but sweeter far are lover's lips on lips !

IONA

OMNIPOTENT GOD, dost from Thy High Seat smile
Pleased upon the wicked and all-hardened face
Of this our world ? If so, Iona's lonesome isle
Must claim that hallowed place.
Here, whilst these lawless isles knew not Thy Name,
From Ireland, with holy zeal, Columba came
And raised to God his church, religion's chosen pile.
As erst the scales dropped from the eyes of Saul,
From sinful man before Columba's shrine they likewise fall.

SLEEP

Solace of life! sweet Sleep; would thy caress
Might ever close my aching eyes, nor would I
Wake when bids the dawn, thy deputy; the stress
Of present ills thou tak'st; for every sigh
Thou giv'st a smile. I know not of the life
Beyond, but that it should atone the strife
Men wage against our God on earth—then why
Should Sleep, eternal Sleep, appal? God knows
That in thy arms my tired soul would fain repose.

HAPPINESS

Am I not happy? Yes, but happiness
Is like a pent-up stream, too deep and wide
To prattle like the brook by watercress
And wood; flows solemnly and still, to bide
The time when it shall reach a channel steep.
So the soul, too full of love and joy, doth keep
In silence and in thought, until its bliss
Shall find an eager outlet in a storm
Of breathless ecstacy before its giver's form.

SHADOWS

WHEN Death shall come to me, if grimly viewed,
His closing arms I will elude;
And to crimson even I will fly,
And be one with the shadows and the sky.

CHILDREN

O, CHILDREN are all born of Happiness—
Happiness who will wean them in the end.
The secrets of their baby hearts to guess,
To join their play—in all she is their friend.

WHEN THOU WAST YOUNG

WHEN thou wast young I loved thee. Yes,
And much thy beauty would extol!
I love thee now—canst thou not guess?
I love thee for thy pure white soul.

ASLEEP

How fares the child? Are her slumbers deep?
I will go to her bed and see.
She has not stirred since she went to sleep,
Since she kissed good-night to me.

She will wake when the lark's shrill song
Floats down from the sky to the green?
I have come from her bed—I have seen—
She will wake where the weary are strong.

TO IVY

AROUND the oak's heart clings the ivy vine.
So when thy arms around me twine
Thou hast no wish that is not mine,
I have no life that is not thine.

HER GRAVE

I DUG the grave—'twas deep, oh! deep—
Deep in my heart I made the grave;
And she whom the angels denied me to keep,
To the angels her spirit I gave.

At the roots of my heart I buried my dear,
And close, oh! close to my soul.
Her ways were the flowers I laid on that bier,
And I water those flowers with dole.

DEPARTURE

A SMILE upon her lips, a whispered part
Of a farewell—no more—
And then the bark that bore her from my heart
Set sail, and steered from shore.

I saw her dimly through the mist
That in my eyes so swiftly came,
I saw the shadow sails assist
To bear her to that land of happy name.

I LONG TO SAY I LOVE THEE

I LONG to say I love thee and to rid
My bosom of its hopelessness. Thou hast
Forgotten our early love, for years have passed,
To change us both since then, and I have hid
Within my heart the love that once I did
Not hesitate to show. One night when last
Thou cam'st, like thy own self, and held me fast
With one arm round my neck as once, and bid
Me tell thee why I was so sad, the tears
Came flooding to my eyes, but I strove and smiled,
Giving as answer thoughts of our younger years.
With breaking heart I made thee comprehend,
As one who tells a story to a child
With a deep moral hidden at the end.

YOUNG LOVE

I ASKED thee, Dear One, in thy younger years
As to a sister, if thou loved'st me;
When straightway thou, climbing upon my knee
As thou wouldst often do to hide thy tears,
Did'st kiss me for thy yes. Still I had fears,
And wishing more to test thy constancy
The reason asked. Another kiss from thee,
And then—"I love thee just for love, for love."

So when that night I laid me down in bed,
Ere sleep had come to seal my eyes, I said,
She loves me as she loves the star-lit sky,
The dewy morning and the sun above,
Which, like great love, we love so naturally,
We never stop to ask the reason why.

LOVE'S FORGIVENESS

I COUNT upon my fingers one by one
The happy years I loved thee as a child
With curls close-clustering and blue eyes mild,
Which now would beam with laughter, now o'errun
With tears at something I had said or done
In all the thoughtlessness of school-boy wild.
But quickly through the tears thy dear eyes smiled,
As after summer shower shines the sun.

Forgive me, oh! forgive me, dearest dear,
That I was ever irritated by
Thy ways, forgive me that I made thee cry;
Yet love me too; oh, love me, love me thou!
For had my hard words never hurt thy ear,
I would not love thee half so dearly now.

FIRST LOVE

WHEN did I love thee first? Why, no more than
Thy years, though I was but in childhood when
Thou wast born. I had been playing up the glen
At camping out; it seemed the birds began
To tell me first the secret, for I ran
Forewarned of something, though I knew not then
How much 'twould bring to me, towards home again.
Then, dear, I found that thou hadst come. I can
Remember with what childish wonder thee
I saw, lying by thy mother; even now
I see the smile with which she welcomed me,
As with finger to her lips she showed me thou
Didst sleep—sweet sang the thrush upon the bough
Outside, as I away stole silently.

A DREAM

AFTER a day's long thought of her, I dreamed
Last night that we were playing in the fields.
Her hair, caught by the breeze, would now and then
Like gold corn tassels hide her sun-tanned cheeks,

Then stream away behind, or cling around
Her neck in half unwilling curls; but when
Her young fresh lips met mine in love's caress,
It, falling wildly o'er her forehead's height,
Would blind us, while I felt it on my mouth.
Then we were climbing up a sea-lapped cliff—
But, oh! ere we could gain the topmost peak
I woke, to hear the moaning of the wind
Still loud within my ears, and restless waves
That beat upon the brown, bleak beach below.

LOVE AND TIME

CRUEL Time, who is the foe of lovers parted,
Long held me captive from my love. "I fear
Thee, Time!" I said; but Love's voice in my ear
I heard replying: "Do not be downhearted;
Naught can fade the cheek, so quickly started,
As inconstancy in love. So keep good cheer;
When Love is by, Time cannot mark his year."
I wondered at the knowledge Love imparted,
And, half trusting and half doubting, waited long.
Until at last from my despiséd thraldom
I was free; when, turning once more toward home,
I saw her as the sun dropped down the sky—
Whispered, while I held her in embraces strong:
"Now I know Time cannot harm when Love is by."

LOVE'S TEACHING

Beloved ! when a child thou wast wont to say
To me—who loved thee then with a boy's love,
Who love thee now with love I try to prove
Is man's—that if I should not grow, but stay
For thee, thy years would o'ertake mine some day.
Then thou wouldst only laugh, the while I strove
To make thee understand I was above
Thee ever ; if we both grew old and grey
I would be first to change. . . . And now how true !
But not as I foretold, for thou hast taught
Me what my elder years have never brought—
The love of man, which for thy sake would do,
Till loving so I loved thee greater too.
Thus the years I hold above thee count as naught.

WRITTEN AT HAMPSTEAD LAKE

Where Shelley used to sail his paper boats

HERE to this breezy upland stream once more,
Oh, Hampstead, do the school-boys come, with free
Unclouded faces, where I love to see
Them at their play, as in the days of yore
When Shelley sailed his paper boats, with straw
For masts, at this same pond ; and you fancy
How, with laughing children round, on bended knee
He launched his tiny craft out from the shore.

Still do thy ships, oh, Shelley, sail their way,
Not on this gentle lake, but o'er Life's sea
Go journeying with words of gold, while they
To every haven bear thy poesy.
And ever so sail on until that day
When man, or world itself, shall cease to be.

WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY COTTAGE

Where I stopped for tea.

Behind me I have left the city's roar,
The burning streets, for fields and valleys cool;
And like a child I feel, just out of school.
Here could I live, I thought, for evermore,
Here in this cottage live and ask no store
Of happiness so great or bountiful.
Straightway I heard a voice, like one to rule
Within me say (it spoke from my heart's core):
"Turn and go back from whence thy footsteps came,
Learn to make others happy; thou shalt be
The first to feel its blest effects." Then ye
Good people of this cottage Paradise,
Farewell! I go, and leave you both where Vice,
And Crime, and Wretchedness are but a name!

THE SLUM CHILD

STRAIGHT from the foulness of the city slum
They brought him to fresh fields—a withered child,
Who stood bewildered 'mid the flowers wild.
He asked if they *were* flowers, and said some
Told him there were such things far from the hum
Of London. So he sat amongst the cowslips,
And plucked a few and smiled, with poor, pale lips
That scarce could form a smile when it had come.

We do not know, O God, what thou wilt give
To us when we are called upon to leave
This world. We feel Thy goodness while we live,
We know Thy law, we pray, and we believe;
And for this child, who never knew a prayer,
Heaven Thou hast, and he will love Thee there.

THE WAYS OF LIFE

Two roads in my youth lie stretched before me ;
  The one I follow, groping in the dark.
  And Life is bitter, as the bitter bark
Of quinine, and salt-bitter as the sea.
On one hand flows a river sluggishly,
  While on the other side there lies a low
  And broken shore ; and always wild winds blow
The dead leaves in a cloud across the lea
Into the stream, where they float on and on.
  And ever with my hands before me spread,
With halting steps I stumble on alone ;
  And ever this is ringing in my head—
The Ways of Life are hard for a great gain :
The goal is reached, but only after pain.

THE END

When from this mortal body pulse and breath
  And will shall all depart, and that may be
  E'en soon or late, for true it is that we
Oft leave this life when least we think of death,
Then this of me do write, the old man saith,
  And on my tomb inscribe, for all to see :
  " Here lieth one whose only enemy

Throughout this life was Self; and Self alone
All hope, ambition, fame and love hath killed."
He died; the grave was unsought and unknown;
The twisted ivy twined an arm around
And hid the letters "Self"; the linnets found
In leaves above his head a place to build,
And roses dropped red petals on his stone.

THE POET'S INSPIRATION

THE Poet sighed, and said with deep despair:
"How can I find in this great London's town
That inspiration which my fame will crown?
The hurrying crowds I hate; the smoky air
Suits not my genius; so away to fair
Warm skies Italian." . . . Thrice had Autumn's brown
Leaves strewn the ground, and thrice wild winds blown down
The winter snow ere he returned—with ne'er
A new idea. But as he strode along
Side streets he saw a starving child, scarce clad.
He had seen many such, and passed; then moved
By sudden impulse gave him all he had;
And, lo! he found unconsciously he loved
Mankind, and that which he had sought so long.

THE POET'S THOUGHTS

WHAT are the Poet's thoughts, and whence come they ?
Surely the voice of God, which in his heart
Finds utterance in that immortal art
Called Poesy. Where oft another's way
Leads by a flower, he sees but that alway ;
But from the Poet's mind great thoughts upstart,
Suggested by its bloom. So doth he part,
But that sweet blossom never fades away.

Blind Milton had no share in these delights.
What need ! On wings of Poesy to heights
Ne'er reached he soared—high as the Pleiades,
Searching the Heavens, poised upon the breeze
Then, sweeping down like Lucifer, he writes
Of Lethe, and of Hell, and sunless seas.

ON A PORTRAIT OF KEATS

In the National Gallery

AND long I gaze before I turn to go.
I seek to grave his image as I find
It here, so like the life, upon my mind.
His eyes of wondrous beauty shine as though
He saw some glorious sight, for us to know
But through his words, without which we are blind ;
And in his face there's that when left behind
Which draws us back, whether we will or no.

We are in love with Keats in face as well
As soul. When we have read again each line
Of his immortal odes, we feel that where
The purest beauty is, his soul doth dwell.
Then Keats thou art not dead to us! and ne'er
Shall be, while we have with us songs like thine.

Written after Reading
"THE SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE"

HER words are like notes clear and full—heart strings
That take all Cupid's skill to sound their song—
A melody that floats out rich and strong,
Now deep, now low pathetic quiverings,
Now piercing joy. Few strike the note which brings
To them this music pure, for those who care
But for Self-Love, and love not purely, bear
No part where Love-Unselfish lives and sings.

Yet all may make attempt; and I have tried,
And feel my soul hath found a voice in these
High poems. But ne'er the less I cannot hide
That I have not yet struck the golden keys
By which I can call forth the Poet's whole—
I am too selfish still to gain her soul.

LOST HAPPINESS

" So sad, so strange, the days that are no more ! "
Back through the years I look with longing gaze ;
The years that brought to me so many days
Of happiness unmarred, alas ! are o'er ;
And deep the cause thereof on my heart's core
Is graved. Ah ! now I know it to be Self.
Out of my Eden I drove forth myself,—
O could the peace I lost this life restore !

Happily there are griefs that can be borne :
There is a sadness which when it is slept
On, flies from the first sunbeam of the morn.
There is Sorrow when friends with you have wept.
But over one pain sleep has no control,
Nor morning stills the anguish of the soul.

THE FIELD OF METZ

Can flowers with their petals purest white
Spring from a field once dyed in blood ? They do.
They spread like snow-flakes far as eye can view ;
Their roots twine round the bones of one who might
Be living now, to cheer his mother's sight.
Men who had brothers, sisters, sweethearts, wives,
Men face to face the first time in their lives
Fell by each other's hands. God, is this right ?

To do or die for glory ! So they fight.
For that, twice fifteen thousand soldiers fell
Pierced through !—and here at nameless graves we pray !
They fought as foes, those whom another day
Perchance they might have met as friends ! Then well
We may ask God—Can this be—is this right ?

A LEGEND OF THE LAHN*

THERE lies a valley far from here,
A valley with a river bright and blue.
Wild are the hills, and wild the deer
That roam the forest through.

Near by a ruined castle stands ;
Two crumbling walls that now
Frown down upon the barren lands
That never know a farmer's plough.

There is a legend of this valley told,
And of the castle on the hill.
Though many a season's moons have rolled
Away, it haunts me still.

*A river in Germany, a tributary of the Rhine.

Twas in the days when knights in armour fought
And fell for glory and renown;
When Charlemagne's proud banner caught
The sun from every citadel and town.

There in his stronghold—now no more—
A young Count lived, and with his train
His only thought to hunt the boar,
And fly the falcon for the crane.

Once while returning from a longer chase
Which led him many a mile away,
He came at even to a place
He had not seen before that day.

The river wide before him spread,
The waves were gleaming in the setting sun;
He stretched himself upon the sandy bed,
And dreamily watched the waters run.

All was so still and all so calm,
He noticed not the day was done,
As with his head upon his arm
He dreamily watched the waters run.

The reeds on the bank of the river moved,
And the waters rushed back in two rippling curves,
And a maiden as fair as the day he loved
Arose from the waves whose God she serves.

Arose from the waves of the river wide,
A nymph of loveliest form and mien ;
Her hair in two golden braids was tied,
And she wore a crown of river-grass green.

He fell in love with this nymph of the stream,
And spent all his time as her thrall ;
The pleasures of hunting became as a dream,
And his charger stood still in his stall.

His falcon grew tired of wearing her hood,
And his hounds grew weary of play ;
The boar roamed unhurt without fear in the wood,
And the crane took unheeded her way.

The maiden he loved as he ne'er loved before,
And she unto him her love would oft tell ;
And over again every day he swore
He'd ne'er love another, he loved her too well.

The fairy-like maiden would then only smile,
And her smile was both happy and sad,
As she said to him, slowly and sadly the while,
" Remember, young knight, that love is soon had.

" We daughters of old Father Rhine,
We love only once, and we love not again ;
So if you desert me, for aye must I pine,
And spend all my days in weeping and pain.

" And my sighs you will hear as you dance in your hall,
Will hear as you hunt in the glen ;
The waves of the river our love will recall
To the pines on the hill-top again.

" The reeds of the river will murmur it through
To the willows that wave on the shore—
Thou shalt hear it again, whate'er thou may'st do,
But me shalt thou never see more."

But the knight only laughed, and said as he smiled,
" Never fear for my love's reality."
And he swore at the feet of the River God's Child
An oath of eternal fidelity.

So days and so weeks and so months passed away,
As light as the clouds in the sun ;
And the knight remained faithful and loving alway,
As loving and faithful as he had begun.

But in time he grew weary of love's first kiss,
Grew tired of love's first embrace ;
He thought of the wild deer and hunts he would miss,
And he longed all the more for the chase.

Day by day the maiden saw,
How his love it cooler grew ;
Day by day she wandered by the shore,
And day by day the more unhappy too.

She waited by the river there,
  Half hid amid the rustling reeds,
About her fell her golden hair,
  But he came not o'er the meads.

Then as she waited, heard from far away
  His bugle blow to cheer the horse and hound;
She sighed, she raised her lovely arms to pray,
  Her heart was breaking at the sound.

Fainter again she heard the bugle sound
  Across the valley wild and up the hill;
Faint and more faint the baying of the hound—
  And then once more the woods were still.

. . . . . .

A knight was found soon after dead—
  He rested beneath a tall pine tree,
And at his feet the river bed:
  And the winds through the reeds moaned drearily

And his castle was left to crumble away,
  And flowers bloomed in the lofty hall,
Where the white owl rested at day,
  'Till naught remained but the outer wall.

And many have said, and swear it is true,
  When the setting sun throws the valley in gloom
(The valley with the river that runs it through)
  They have heard from the pines that loom

Dark on the hill, and from the brown bull-rush
That waves in the stream, a voice that murmurs
and cries ;
And it rises and falls on the evening's hush—
A sound of wailing, a sound of sighs.

And they say 'tis the river-maiden, who sighs
And who mourns for her false lover-knight ;
And the peasantry all with frightened eyes
Shun the wild valley at night.

And the river runs through the valley wild,
And circles the hill with the castle stone ;
And the peasants tell of the river child
Who haunts the river-shore with moan.

And the river runs through the valley wide,
And the wind at night bends the rushes o'er,
Till they shiver and murmur, side by side,
In the waves that whisper to the shore.

AT LAST

When I at last am dead,
Carried from my death-bed,
Place a cold stone at my head,
And then pass by.

Drop not a foolish tear
Upon my lone grave here,
For when the end draws near,
It is not hard to die.

But in your hearts this say,
He lies as we shall lie some day,
All his faults are swept away,
Only good remains for aye.

SCENE.—An old man and woman resting under the shelter of a portico. They are clothed in rags and emaciated.

(*Aside*) NEWSBOY (to Stranger):

Yes, sir, you'll find them here every night;
They think they're children, and call each other
foolish names. Listen!

OLD MAN.

Sit closer, dearest Ann—so; lean thy head
Against my bosom. Didst ever know a mother?

ANN.

Oxford Street's my mother, or every street
And stone in London, for I've known them all
Since I first 'gan to notice things.

OLD MAN.

A hard,
Cruel mother.

ANN.

And one that gives birth every day
To many such as I. Hast thou a mother?

OLD MAN.

I do not know. But often in my dreams
There comes a face—a sweet and gentle face—
I see it bending over me as though
I lay in bed—indeed, I feel as if
I were in bed, and she my mother come
To kiss good-night. Then she is gone, and I
Awake to darkness and to cold. I see
Her often now of late. I cannot think
What it may mean.

ANN.

Is't all thou canst remember,
That sweet face?

OLD MAN.

Yes, all.

ANN.

But why think 'tis thy mother?
Like as not it is an angel, although angels
Must hate London town.

OLD MAN (*absently*).

If it is my mother,
How came I here, and wherefore does she not
Come to me? If not my mother, why then do
I see this vision sweet, and think 'tis she?
O where my mother? Where am I? Oh, oh, oh!

ANN.

If 'tis thy mother she will come to thee.
O would that I had dreams like thine. O would
A sweet and gentle face bend over me,
E'en though in a dream. But all is dark
As this black square; or, if I dream it is
To dream of never-ending terraces,
And hurrying crowds with hideous heads,
That ever urge me on o'er fiery streets
That scorch and burn my feet till I fall down
Insensible.

OLD MAN.

That's strange, for I oft dream
That I am near a blazing fire, but feel
No warmth; instead grow colder till I wake
Up shivering.

ANN.

What are dreams?

OLD MAN.

If I should see
An angel in my dreams, I'd think that dreams
Were glimpses into Heaven. But I do not know.

ANN.

I fear we dream of Hell.

OLD MAN.

Then we do dream
Of London.

ANN.

Then I do dream of mother.

OLD MAN.

Canst thou remember no sweet face, no home
However mean, no father and no mother?

ANN.

I have said I can remember nothing.
Yet, strange it seems so very long ago,
I knew a man—a great gruff man—but he
Was not my father—least, I do not think so.
I often see him in my dreams—oh, God!

OLD MAN.

Poor child! Poor dear! Draw closer unto me,
And let thy long curls mingle with mine own.

ANN.

They are as black as mine are golden. See
How these fine threads so stray and mix with thine,
Like starry clusters that in black skies do shine!

OLD MAN.

Thy feet are cruelly torn. Hast thou had food
Or nourishment of any kind to-day?

ANN.

Nay, tell me first didst thou?—and if may-hap
Thou didst, then thou wilt feel the more for me.

OLD MAN.

Alas, too well I know thou didst go hungry!
Poor Ann! and I have nought. Why do all spurn
A child like thee? Thy little pleading ways
Would melt the heart of hardest man, and not
To speak of woman. Did none give to thee?

ANN.

None; and yet one woman gave me much—a smile—
Which still I live on, albeit 'twas sad,
And not the happy one I should have looked for
In one so finely dressed.

OLD MAN.

Didst thou know aught of her?

ANN.

No, but I have seen so many like her.

OLD MAN.

Street Walkers they are called.

ANN.

I do not know—
But they are kind to me, when no one else
Is kind. I think that I could live on kindness.

OLD MAN.

They are our sisters in calamity.

ANN.

They are fallen angels.

OLD MAN.

Ay, but will they go
To Heaven?

ANN.

Many will, that I am sure.

OLD MAN.

In all the thousand thousand souls that brush
Thee by in London, does no one smile on thee?

ANN.

Alas! more pennies I receive than smiles.
But what didst thou to-day?

OLD MAN.

I paced the streets.
I cannot think why all do spurn me so.
To one I said—"Can I do aught for thee?
For I am young, but have not Youth's full strength
For hunger, yet will I wait on thee." "Poor fool!"
I heard him say, though not unkindly, as
He turned away. They all do call me that—
"Poor fool!" What means it, dear? I am no fool,
But only weak and hungry—that is all.

ANN.

Thou hast had nothing, then. Oh, would I were
A dog, such as I see dressed up in coats—
A little pampered thing, no bigger than
The muff fine ladies carry in the Park.

OLD MAN.

Dogs have no souls.

ANN.

I am not sure of that
Surer am I that many men have none.
There *is* a God.

OLD MAN.

Ay, truly, dearest Ann!
And let us go to Him, for He will love us.

ANN.

God lives in Heaven. We cannot go there.

OLD MAN.

God lives in the country and in the fields,
And in the woods and hills and purling streams.
God lives in the song-birds, in the flowers.
Thou canst not kill a bird but God will grieve,
Nor pluck a daisy without hurting God.

ANN.

Then God will love us there!

OLD MAN.

Ay, that He will.

ANN.

But where is this country thou dost speak of?

OLD MAN.

Why, 'tis not far from here. For one morn when
That great bright star above us was the last
Left shining in the sky, and all the streets
Still silent and rich London slept, I saw
A man who drove to Covent Garden Market,

His wagon so high-heaped with vegetables,
It seemed a green field moving, and I asked,
Fearing he would not heed me, " Come you from
The country ? Is it very far from here ? "
" An hour's steady drive, and would that I
Were back," said he. " I hate the crowded town ! "
Then pointing down that long street looking north,
He told me it would bring me to fresh fields.
" But you are old," he said, " and cannot walk."
I laughed aloud, and tried to run to show
Him I was still a Youth, but slipped and fell.
He drove off, saying—what they always say—
" Poor fool ! "

ANN.

Yes, but the country ! the green fields !
How reach them, and what like are they once reached ?

OLD MAN.

Much like the Park, dear Ann, only they stretch
Away for ever ; no unwholesome streets,
But pleasant paths that wander everywhere.
No city-walls surround us, but the hills ;
Upon our faces feel no poisonous gas,
But the flower-scented breeze ; above our heads
No smoke and fog, but sunshine and blue sky,
And milk-white clouds that make me long to ride
Upon their brilliant backs.

ANN.

And we can wander wild
O'er field and fell ?

OLD MAN.
Assuredly, dear Ann.

ANN.
Then here we stay too long? Let us to God.
I long to see His country—let us go!

OLD MAN.
Alas! thy little feet can carry thee
No farther now, and thou art weak; thy head
Ere I did speak of God was heavy on
My shoulder—but, yes, let us go, and when
Thou art a weary I will help thee—so!
Or rest awhile, thy head upon my breast.

ANN.
Let us to God and leave behind this Hell.

OLD MAN.
In London we will then no longer dwell.

(*They move away slowly.*)

NEWSBOY (briskly to Stranger):
They will be back again to-morrow night. When
morning comes
They forget where they are going, and wander up
and down
The streets. Men around here say they are not
long for this world.
What do you think?

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